

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT *UPDATE*

August 1999

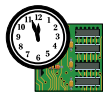
Locals unite to beat the Y2K clock

The countdown for Y2K is well under way and emergency managers across the state are working with their local officials to make the most of the century date change as a tool to promote emergency preparedness for their citizens.

"Y2K has provided an opportunity for emergency management to raise its consciousness within the community because it's such a fixed date and we can use it as leverage to get people involved in planning," says Mark Marchbank, deputy coordinator of Virginia Beach's Office of Emergency Management.

From east to west, each locality is using this milestone to heighten contingency planning by focusing on an all-hazard approach. Likening the date change to a winter storm, they are trying to downplay "doom and gloom" and encouraging citizens to prepare for three to five days of minor inconveniences. While individual plans may differ, strong consistencies emerge among the localities surveyed here.

Sharing the wealth



The regional "support system" emerges as one of the major trends in Y2K planning and preparedness. By acknowledging the strength found in numbers, communities across the Commonwealth are reaping the benefits of shared resources and ideas and working faster and smarter than might be possible individually.

In Northern Virginia, representatives from the city of Fredericksburg and the counties of Spotsylvania, Stafford, Caroline and King George (Planning District 16) have been meeting since the first of the year and sharing information so they don't duplicate efforts, according to Capt. Douglas Boggs, Spotsylvania County Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

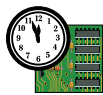
"Our ability to share information and lessen the learning curve has been one of the biggest benefits of our regional efforts," adds Clarence A. Robinson, Fredericksburg's Director of Fiscal Affairs. "The common message is to promote public awareness."



An inside look. Localities across the state are checking their operating systems for Y2K compliance to ensure normally unseen chips do not cause serious disruptions to critical services.

In Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach has joined 11 other municipalities in a partnership that includes utility companies, health care providers, the military, and businesses. The major focus is a public awareness campaign called Hampton Roads Y2K Citizen Info Source.

Localizing messages



In Spotsylvania, Boggs says the team approach has continued with the county putting together work groups to evaluate a number of important operational functions. For example, a testing team began evaluating generators and equipment at the beginning of their new fiscal year in July.

A fuel schedule team is monitoring consumption for generators and emergency

vehicles and has had a fuel truck assigned to the county to determine how much fuel is used in a 24-hour period. Business continuity and logistics teams are also working to ensure operations are not disrupted and that critical items are available throughout the transition.

Fredericksburg has its own in-house team that meets weekly to discuss public health, welfare and safety issues using the Century Date Change Initiative Office model. Robinson says they are now intensifying their public awareness efforts and live testing of contingency components outlined by various city departments – especially tie-ins of government software with banking. He says they will run live tests of dummy payroll and direct deposits to demonstrate their readiness.

Believing that practice makes perfect, the Planning District 16 team is also planning a regional exercise slated for Oct. 29, which will include key staff from all participating localities. An exercise design team is developing scenarios to test their readiness.

All the localities mentioned here plan to activate their EOCs at some level during the changeover with additional staff on standby between Christmas and New Year's Day. In Albemarle County, EOC Coordinator Kaye M. Harden developed a contingency plan as a supplement to their basic emergency operations plan that includes both local and regional approaches.

Communications will be a major focus in Harden's plan with amateur radio operators set up at area police, fire and rescue stations to act as focal points for citizens should phone service be disrupted. (*cont'd, page 3*)

Come and get them ... VDES still has an ample supply of Red Cross Y2K brochures. Call Bertha Fegans at (804) 897-6510 to get yours.

Fire spotlights special needs sheltering

It was the perfect recipe for disaster as lightning struck the roof of the Old Dominion Home for Adults in Richmond, Va., in the early morning hours of May 23.

Severe thunderstorms had knocked out power to thousands of area residents, and Richmond firefighters had been out on numerous calls throughout the night.

Though storms had disrupted communications on the 911 system, an emergency call about smoke in the building made it through. Richmond Assistant Fire Marshal Bruce Epps arrived on scene and told staff to activate their fire alarm at about 1:20 a.m. after seeing fire on the building's slate roof.



Evacuation and Staging

According to Capt. Don Jose Horton, public information officer and community liaison for the Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services, firefighters and city police evacuated the residents using the yard as a staging area while fire officials started laying the groundwork for relocating the displaced individuals.

Calls went out to key players such as the Richmond Department of Social Services, American Red Cross, and Richmond Ambulance Authority as they began to investigate transportation and shelter options for the residents.

"We are fortunate to have a fire department who views our relationship as one of mutual support," says Michael A. Evans, director of the Richmond Department of Social Services. "They do not hesitate to offer to help. By the time we got on the scene at about 2:30 a.m., the fire was under control and the fire department had done a great deal of the up-front work securing transportation and identifying space for the 64 people needing shelter."



Transportation to Shelter

Evans and Horton agree one of the biggest issues on the scene was the need to facilitate transportation for a large number of people in the early morning hours. The Richmond Ambulance Authority stepped in to transport patients who were in wheelchairs or subject to other mobility restrictions. For the rest of the residents, however, many of the standard options such as Greater Richmond Transit Company and school buses were not available.

That's when Horton says they decided to try Greyhound Buslines. Terminal Manager Floyd Miles says he received a call at home and didn't have to think twice about sending two buses and drivers to transport the residents to their temporary shelter at the Arthur Ashe Center and then to their temporary quarters in other adult homes.

"We have people ask for buses all the time, but this was a crisis situation," says Miles. "I called my district manager to explain the situation and was able to send a terminal supervisor and a driver supervisor who was certified to drive a bus."



Just about all the home residents suffer from chronic mental illness, which Evans says posed some unique concerns during the evacuation and relocation. Transporting medications with them was critical, and patient accountability was also an issue at all stages. The home operators called in additional staff to assist the 10 social services and four Red Cross workers on the scene.



Shelter and Accountability

"We had to make sure the folks did not wander as they are accustomed to doing," explains Evans. "We had to help them understand the situation was temporary."

These concerns also continued through to the shelter operation, according to Kenny Updike, manager of disaster services for the Greater Richmond Chapter of the American Red Cross.

"We were supporting the city in operating their shelter," explains Updike. "We provided logistical support such as cots, blankets, food and beverages as well as items like disposable gowns, slippers, bed pads and adult undergarments that we don't normally stock in shelters."

"When working with a special needs population, it is important to note that the Red Cross cannot accept responsibility for the care of these individuals. Medical care and population control are not normally issues for us. People who use our shelters can come and go at will."

Evans says he remembers about three or four other cases in which his staff had to complete this type of evacuation and each was unique. Last fall, Evans says they had to relocate about 50 physically disabled residents from an independent living facility with no staff aid. That case, he says, was extremely difficult to manage.

Updike says this is probably one of the most difficult sheltering situations any agency would have to open and credits all the players from the private, government and public sectors for working so well together to create such a smooth operation.

Evans adds that joint training and interagency support are important to maintaining readiness for these contingencies. He says his agency brings in the Red Cross to train his staff on sheltering operations at least once a year and that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services stages citywide interagency training every fall as well.

Special Needs Checklist

- ✓ Transportation options for any time of day/night.
- ✓ Availability of appropriate attire (footwear, gowns, etc.) for patients needing shelter.
- ✓ Adequate staff to monitor patients both at site and in the shelter.
- ✓ Medications transported with patients.

How's that again? ...

The URL we provided in last month's issue for accessing the "Talking About Disaster" guide was incomplete. The correct address is www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/guide.html.

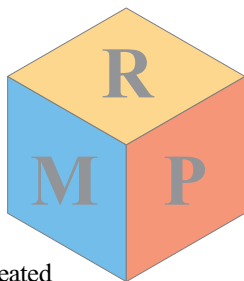
HAZ MAT



RMP puts responders and industry to the test

by Robert D. Phillips
Hazmat Officer - Area 4

Risk Management Planning or RMP is no longer just good practice, it's now the rule to better prepare emergency responders, industry and communities for accidental releases of certain hazardous materials.



The Environmental Protection Agency created RMP to minimize the threat of these releases and to increase communications between major players. It lists specific chemicals and reporting thresholds and requires any businesses storing or using these chemicals in amounts over the threshold to demonstrate compliance.

Key elements of RMP include:

- ◆ Accident scenarios (including worst-case)
- ◆ Hazards assessment of the type of incidents that could occur at the plant
- ◆ Prevention program including plant design, employee training, and other efforts to reduce accidents
- ◆ Emergency response plan describing what should be done when an accident occurs

To be effective, RMP must be tested and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Rockingham County and the Merck Stonewall Plant are an excellent example of this planning in practice. They have worked together for the past several years to establish response guidelines and training and gather regularly to exercise their response skills and share information regarding specific geographic and chemical hazards.

In June, they launched a full-scale exercise designed to meet the RMP rule requirements and evaluate local response capabilities. The scenario called for a simulated tornado that touched down at the Merck plant causing a railcar to leak Anhydrous Hydrogen Chloride, a colorless gas that is stored as a liquid at high pressure and low temperatures.

In addition, the scenario called for several plant fires, missing personnel and an individual trapped in a confined space. Merck's own in-house team responded along with several community volunteer fire and rescue companies. The Rockingham County Hazardous Materials Response Team also provided technical expertise and equipment to the exercise.

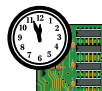
The exercise itself was an unqualified success with players implementing the incident command system early and moving quickly to request additional resources. More importantly, however, their teamwork and efforts to keep one another informed are prime examples of the keys to successful Risk Management Planning.

The close working relationship shared between Rockingham County and Merck illustrates how communities and industry pull together for one common goal — safety thinking. They refuse to “risk it all” by not effectively implementing RMP.

Local Y2K Planning (continued from page 1)

Amateur radio operators will also be monitoring international frequencies to see how other countries are coping with the date change.

Gearing up public awareness campaigns



Communities are taking the same two-pronged approach to public awareness with integrated regional and local efforts. The Planning District 16 team has put together a regional Y2K brochure that is being distributed along with the Red Cross pamphlet in public and governmental buildings. They have also created a public relations team to talk to civic and church groups, parent teacher associations, and businesses about preparedness.

The Hampton Roads Y2K Citizen Info Source has launched a regional Y2K Web site with information on preparedness and mitigation as well as links to individual municipality sites and industry partners. They are also going to establish a toll-free telephone number and speakers' bureau to access and receive information from participating localities and are working on outdoor and print advertising and grocery bag messages/stuffers.

“Our goal is to be the objective source of comprehensive information no matter where our citizens live,” says Emma Inman, Virginia Beach public relations manager and regional public information committee chairperson.

Videos are being used effectively in cities and counties across the state. The Planning District 16 group has worked with their area cable company to produce a 15-minute video on Y2K. Virginia Beach has produced its own video explaining the “Y2K bug” and promoting individual preparedness and planning. Fredericksburg developed a 45-minute video with a panel of area service providers discussing Y2K issues, preparedness, and consumer services.

Town meetings are being used to get the word out as well. Fredericksburg hosted one of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion “Community Conversations” on July 19 and Virginia Beach will host a similar session on Aug. 18. Charlottesville is hosting monthly town meetings on different aspects of the issue.

In Spotsylvania, they are making employees stakeholders in the process. Boggs says that's why they created a “WhY2K Infofest” just for this internal audience. Along with a cookout and displays, participants learned about public awareness programs and got to visit a computer room with Y2K Web pages and links. Now employees are joining the county PR team as preparedness ambassadors.

In confronting an issue that can seem somewhat sterile and cold, Harden hasn't forgotten the value of the human touch as he works with Albemarle County neighborhood watch groups to help them develop their own Y2K plans. He says these volunteers have offered to pool their resources such as four-wheel-drive-vehicles, generators and wells; serve as backup drivers; and check on their neighbors.

As the countdown continues, emergency managers like Mark Marchbank are seizing the day to reach citizens at all levels to “get into their heads about continuity and contingency planning.” For more information on the above programs, contact:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| □ Mark Marchbank, Virginia Beach | (757) 427-4228 |
| □ Emma Inman, Virginia Beach | (757) 427-4436 |
| □ Doug Boggs, Spotsylvania | (540) 582-7037 |
| □ Clarence Robinson, Fredericksburg | (540) 372-1017 |
| □ Kaye Harden, Albemarle | (804) 970-3561 |

Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Decision Making & Problem Solving

August 10/Richmond

Coordinator's Briefing

August 11-12/Fredericksburg

EOC Management & Operations

August 17-19/Salem

ICS/EOC Interface

August 24-25/Culpeper

Disaster Related Needs of Seniors & Persons with Disabilities

September 9/Culpeper

Emergency Planning

September 14-16/Harrisonburg

Leadership & Influence

September 21-23/Salem

Developing Volunteer Resources

September 28-29/Richmond

Reservist Training

Emergency Information System Sustainment Training

August 12/Richmond
September 2/Richmond

VEOC Tabletop Exercise II

August 12/Richmond

Rapid Assessment Workbook

Overview
September 2/Richmond

Information & Planning Branch Workshop

September 8/Richmond

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Branch & Safety Officer (Pilot Course)

September 20-22/Va. Beach

Hazmat Conference

September 23-25/Va. Beach

Search and Rescue

Managing Search Operations

August 23-26/Quantico

Practical Search Operations

September 17-19/Mount Jackson

Practical Search Operations

September 27-30/Quantico
(Tentative)

FRESH Opportunity

The Second Annual Fire, Rescue, EMS Safety, Health and Wellness Symposium will be held on Sept. 18-19 at the National Fire Academy at Emmitsburg, Md. The registration fee of \$200 (with lodging) or \$150 (without) includes participation, training materials, meals and activity fitness cards.

For more information on workshops and registration, contact Stephen Dickstein at sdickstein@mwcog.org or call at (202) 962-3261.

The Latest "Update"

Wading right in. VDES welcomes Kenneth "Wade" Collins as the new hazmat officer for the Danville area.

He comes to the agency by way of the City of Danville Fire Department where he spent the last 11 years as a Fire Officer/Fire Fighter/Hazardous Materials Specialist.

His record of public safety service spans some 16 years and includes stints as both a volunteer and career fire fighter as well as an emergency medical technician.

Collins is an adjunct Fire Instructor III with the state Department of Fire Programs and holds an associates degree in Fire Science from Northern Virginia Community College. He has been active in the state's hazmat program since its inception and says he looks forward to focusing his career in the hazmat field on the VDES team.

He and his wife, Sandy, live in Pittsylvania County's Mount Hermon community with their eight-year old daughter, Ashley, and six-year old son, Andrew.



Moving on up. VDES Public Information Director Michael J. La Civita has departed for an at-will gubernatorial appointment with Virginia Secretary of Transportation, Shirley Ybarra.

In more than 19 years of service, La Civita has made numerous contributions to the agency but is most proud of the inroads he has made in teaching emergency managers to work with the media.

Early in his tenure, La Civita developed a media relations workshop to combat emergency managers' discomfort with reporters. Focusing on "working" rather than "dealing" with the media, it has grown into a much-requested, three-day course.

La Civita has also served as a liaison between the governor's office and VDES, serving on transition teams for both George Allen and Jim Gilmore. He says he will miss working with the many diligent and loyal emergency managers and staff across the Commonwealth and hopes to continue nurturing relationships between state government and localities in his new position.



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